



# **The status of large-scale assessment in the Pacific Region**

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The chief state school officers (directors, ministers, and superintendents) and curriculum and instruction chiefs and directors of research and evaluation in the jurisdictions within REL Pacific who serve on its advisory group have identified the need for effective large-scale assessment as a major priority for improving student achievement. This technical brief responds to that identified need.

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## Summary

**This technical brief describes the large-scale assessment measures and practices used in the jurisdictions served by the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory. The need for effective large-scale assessment was identified as a major priority for improving student achievement in the Pacific Region jurisdictions: American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of Palau (National Education Association 2007; Pacific Regional Advisory Committee 2005; South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment 2008). These needs assessment efforts made it clear that educators want information related to the adoption, development, and revision of large-scale assessments for use with the culturally and linguistically diverse students in the Pacific Region jurisdictions.**

To provide timely information about large-scale assessment across the Pacific Region, the study identifies for each jurisdiction:

- Currently used large-scale assessment measures.
- Whether the measures are norm- or criterion-referenced.
- Content areas assessed.
- Languages used in the assessments.
- Grade levels at which tests are administered.
- Frequency of test administration.
- When the tests are administered during the school year.

Analyses indicate that all the jurisdictions implement large-scale assessments, using a variety of assessment measures and practices. The majority of the large-scale assessments are specific to the jurisdiction in which they are implemented, criterion-referenced, in English, and administered annually.

# Technical brief

## Why this brief?

To test large numbers of students efficiently and obtain results that are reliable across students, schools, and school districts, policymakers, assessment directors, and educators must have access to large-scale assessment measures and practices and must use them effectively. The primary purpose of large-scale assessment is accountability and the provision of information to the federal government, state education agencies, key stakeholders, and the public on whether and how well schools are meeting their achievement standards (Landau, Vohs, and Romano 1999; Popham 2001).

Data indicate that regardless of whether—and to what extent—large-scale assessment is federally mandated for each jurisdiction, policymakers and educators throughout the Pacific Region have a strong interest in the topic (Burger, Mauricio, and Ryan 2007; Leung, Keir, and Terada 2006; National Education Association 2007; Pacific Regional Advisory Committee 2005). As Linn and Herman (1997, p. iii) explain, effective assessments “can motivate students to learn better, teachers to teach better, and schools to be more educationally effective.” Indeed, the Pacific Regional Advisory Committee (2005) for educational needs assessment identified standards, assessments, and accountability as the top three priorities for improving student achievement in the Pacific Region. And in a recent study that focused on interviews with Pacific Region clients, 72 percent of respondents identified standards, assessments, and accountability as important in improving student achievement (Leung, Keir, and Terada 2006).

## Study questions

This brief focuses on the status of large-scale assessment practices in the Pacific Region related to the following key questions:

- Which large-scale assessment measures are being used throughout the Pacific Region?
- Are the current assessment measures norm- or criterion-referenced (see box 1 for definitions)?
- Which content areas are being assessed by large-scale assessments?
- In what languages are the large-scale assessments administered?
- At what grade levels are the large-scale assessments administered?
- How often are the large-scale assessments administered?
- At what times during the school year are the large-scale assessments administered?

Data profiles submitted by members of the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group, provided answers to the key questions in this study about large-scale assessments in the Pacific Region. Data were collected in the summer and fall of 2007.

### BOX 1

#### Key terms

*A norm-referenced assessment* is a test or other type of assessment designed to provide a measure of performance that is interpreted in terms of an individual’s relative standing in some known group.

*A criterion-referenced assessment* is a test or other type of assessment designed to compare a student’s performance with set criteria (for example, state or local standards) rather than with the performance of other students.

**Data indicate that regardless of whether—and to what extent—large-scale assessment is federally mandated for each jurisdiction, policymakers and educators throughout the Pacific Region have a strong interest in the topic**

## Results

Findings on the status of large-scale assessment practices are organized below by jurisdiction (tables 1–10).

TABLE 1  
Large-scale assessment data profile for American Samoa, 2007/08

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
Stanford Achievement Test, 10th edition	Norm	Annually	End of school year	Reading: 4, 8, 10 Language: 4, 8, 10 Listening: 4, 8, 10 Spelling: 4, 8, 10 Math: 4, 8, 10 Science: 4, 8, 10 Social studies: 4, 8, 10 Thinking skills: 4, 8, 10	English
National Assessment of Educational Progress	Criterion	Biennially	Spring	English: 4, 8	English
American Samoa Standards-Based Assessment	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Reading: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 Writing: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 Math: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10	English

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 2  
Large-scale assessment data profile for Guam, 2007/08

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
Stanford Achievement Test, 10th edition	Norm	Annually	End of year	Environment: 1, 2 Language: 1–12 Listening: 1–8 Math: 1–12 Science: 3–12 Social science: 3–12 Spelling: 1–12	English
Direct Instruction Corrective Reading Program	Criterion	Every four to eight weeks	Four- to eight-week intervals	Math: 1–8 Reading: 1–8	English
National Assessment of Educational Progress	Criterion	Biennially	Spring	English: 4, 8	English
Nelson Reading Inventory	Criterion	Biannually	August and May	Vocabulary: K–5	English

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 3  
**Large-scale assessment data profile for Hawai'i, 2007/08**

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
Hawaii State Writing Assessment	Criterion	Annually	Fall	Writing: 4, 6, 9, 11	English
Hawaiian Aligned Portfolio Assessment	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Math: 3, 4 Hawaiian: 3, 4 Reading: 3, 4 Language: 3, 4	Hawaiian
Hawaiian Content Performance Standards III	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Math and English: 3–8, 10 Science: 5, 7, 11	English
National Assessment of Educational Progress	Criterion	Biennially	Spring	English: 4, 8	English
Terra Nova	Norm	Annually	Spring	Math: 3–8, 10 English: 3–8, 10 Reading: 3–8, 10 Language: 3–8, 10	English

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 4  
**Large-scale assessment data profile for the Republic of the Marshall Islands, 2007/08**

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
Marshall Islands Standard Assessment Test I	Criterion	Annually	Beginning of second quarter	Reading (English): 4 Reading (Marshallese): 4 Math: 4	English Marshallese
Marshall Islands Standard Assessment Test II	Criterion	Annually	Beginning of second and fourth quarters	Reading (English): 7 Reading (Marshallese): 7 Math: 7	English Marshallese
Marshall Islands Standard Assessment Test III	Criterion	Annually	Beginning of fourth quarter	Reading (English): 8 Reading (Marshallese): 8 Math: 8	English Marshallese
Pacific Islands Literacy Level	Norm	Biennially	Beginning of second quarter	Reading (English): 5 Marshallese: 5 Math: 5	English Marshallese

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 5

**Large-scale assessment data profile for the Federated States of Micronesia: Chuuk, 2007/08**

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
High School Entrance Test	Criterion	Annually	End of school year	Language arts: 8 Math: 8 Science: 8 Social studies: 8	English
Language Arts Test	Norm	Pre and post	Fall and spring	Reading: 4 Listening: 4 Writing: 4 Sentence structure: 4 Spelling: 4	English
Federated States of Micronesia Minimum Competency National Standardized Tests	Criterion	Annually	End of school year	Language arts: 6, 8, 10 Math: 6, 8, 10 Essay <sup>a</sup> : 6, 8, 10 Science: 8	English

a. English or Chuukese.

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 6

**Large-scale assessment data profile for the Federated States of Micronesia: Kosrae, 2007/08**

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
Kosrae Achievement Tests	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Math: 8 Reading: 8 Writing: 8 Science: 8	English
Kosrae High School Entrance Test	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Math: 9 Reading: 9 Writing: 9	English
Kosraean Language Proficiency Test	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Writing: 2 Reading: 2	Kosraean
Mathematics Curriculum Referenced Test	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Math: 4, 6	English
Federated States of Micronesia Minimum Competency National Standardized Tests	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Math: 6, 8, 10 Reading: 6, 8, 10 Writing <sup>a</sup> : 6, 8, 10 Science: 8	English

a. Kosraean or English.

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 7

**Large-scale assessment data profile for the Federated States of Micronesia: Pohnpei, 2007/08**

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
College of Micronesia Entrance Test	Criterion	Annually	End of school year	Language arts: 12 Math: 12 Essay: 12	English
Pohnpei Ministry of Education High School Entrance Test	Criterion	Annually	End of school year	Language arts: 8 Math: 8	English
Pohnpei Standards-Based Assessment	Criterion	Annually	Spring	Reading: 3, <sup>a</sup> 5, 7, 9, 11	English
Federated States of Micronesia Minimum Competency National Standardized Tests	Criterion	Annually	Third quarter	Language arts: 6, 8, 10 Math: 6, 8, 10 Science: 8	English; Pohnpeian

a. Pohnpeian.

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 8

**Large-scale assessment data profile for the Federated States of Micronesia: Yap, 2007/08**

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
Exit Standards-Based Assessment	Criterion	Annually	End of year	Math: 8 Reading: 8 Writing: 8	English
New Baseline Curriculum Standards-Based Assessment	Criterion	Annually	Fall and spring	Math: 6 Language arts: 6 Science: 6	English
Federated States of Micronesia Minimum Competency National Standardized Tests	Criterion	Annually	End of year	Math: 6, 8, 10 Language arts: 6, 8, 10 Writing <sup>a</sup> : 6, 8, 10 Science: 8	English; Yapese

a. Yapese.

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 9

**Large-scale assessment data profile for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, 2007/08**

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
Stanford Achievement Test, 10th edition	Norm	Annually	April	Science: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 Math: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 Reading: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 Spelling: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 Language: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 Thinking skills: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 Social studies: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11	English
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System Standards-Based Assessment	Criterion	Annually	May	Science: 4, 8, 12 Reading: 4, 8, 11 Writing: 5, 7, 11 Math: 3, 7, 10 Social studies: 3, 6, 8, 12	English
Reading Diagnostics	Criterion	Annually	August	Reading: 1	English
Reading First	Criterion	Three times a year	September, January, and May	Reading: K–3	English

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

TABLE 10

**Large-scale assessment data profile for the Republic of Palau, 2007/08**

Large-scale assessment	Criterion- or norm-referenced	Frequency of assessment	Timing of assessment	Content area and grade levels assessed	Language of assessment
Palau Achievement Test	Criterion	Annually	End of school year	English: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 Math: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 Science: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 Social studies: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 Palauan studies: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12	English
Palau English Reading Assessment	Criterion	Three times a year	Beginning, middle, and end of year	English: 1–3	English
Palau Quarterly Assessment Test	Criterion	Four times a year	End of each quarter	English: 1–8 Math: 1–8 Science: 1–8 Social studies: 1–8 Palauan studies: 1–8	English; Palauan

Source: Authors' review of data profiles from the Research and Evaluation Cadre, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory group.

## Study findings

This study reveals the following findings:

- Regardless of the jurisdictions' required level of compliance with federal assessment mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all are administering large-scale assessments to their students.
- The jurisdictions are administering a total of 31 different assessment instruments. Of these, three assessments are being administered in more than one location: the National Assessment of Educational Progress; the Stanford Achievement Test, 10th edition; and the Federated States of Micronesia Minimum Competency National Standardized Tests.
- The majority (28 assessments, or 90 percent) of the assessments used in the jurisdictions are specific to the location in which they are administered.
- Across jurisdictions, 27 of 31 large-scale assessments being used are criterion-referenced, and 4 are norm-referenced.
- The jurisdictions are using large-scale assessments to test 14 content areas.<sup>1</sup>

The highest percentage of content areas tested are in math (24 percent), reading (22 percent), science (12 percent), and writing (11 percent). Nine content areas tested relate to language proficiency: comprehension, language, listening, sentence structure, spelling, vocabulary, reading, and writing.

- Most of the large-scale assessments (70 percent) are administered in English only. Other languages used include Chuukese, Hawaiian, Kosraean, Marshallese, Palauan, Pohnpeian, and Yapese.
- All grades (K–12) are participating in some version of large-scale assessment across the jurisdictions.
- Across the region grade 8 has the highest concentration of assessments (71 percent).

### Note

1. Research and Evaluation Cadre members identified content areas in open-ended format responses. Therefore, there may be more overlap in content areas across large-scale assessments than indicated by respondents.

**The majority of the assessments used in the jurisdictions are specific to the location in which they are administered**

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